

**Testimony of George Noujam
in Support of**

HB 5254: An Act Repealing the Municipal Jeopardy Tax

I appear before you today to testify as a small business owner, as a commissioner on the Economic Development for the city of Torrington and on behalf of other businesses.

As you all know, businesses are struggling to survive during these tough economic situations, and we are trying to endure the tough times.

Last year around this time, the tax collector came to my place of business on a Friday afternoon and gave my employee (without my presence) a tax bill with a dollar amount that is a lot bigger than I owed and told him that we had to pay it by Monday morning or otherwise he will close the business.

When I saw the bill, I thought clearly that the bill was a mistake and I could not possibly owe that amount.

On that Monday I contacted the tax collector to follow up and he informed me that he imposed what is called the Jeopardy tax because I was two weeks late.

Following the conversation with the tax collector, I immediately contacted the Mayor's office and met with Rose Ponte the coordinator of economic development. Ms. Ponte informed me that Robert Crovo the tax collector for the city of Torrington has served many businesses with the same notice and many of the businesses were not delinquent on their taxes.

Mr. Crovo read in the paper that Big Y supermarket laid off few employees, so he imposed the Jeopardy tax on them. Big Y has gone into \$6 million renovation 18 months ago in Torrington, and they are up to date on their taxes.

Mr. Crovo went after an independent Blockbuster Store in Torrington just because he heard that Blockbuster Corporation may file for Bankruptcy, and he imposed the Jeopardy tax on them as well.

Many other businesses in our city had suffered the wrath of our tax collector Mr. Crovo who armed himself with the Jeopardy tax.

It is my belief and that of many other business owners and town officials that the jeopardy tax must be used when there is a probable cause, and with good reason.

I implore you to take this matter seriously and to consider changing the Jeopardy tax language to protect businesses in our cities and towns and by doing so State of Connecticut will become once again a business friendly State.